[NEW SERIES.]
Vol. 2. *Price, 10 Cents. Per Annum, $3.* No. 19.

[Whole No. 306.]

SATURDAY, AUGUST 1, 1874.

Subject: The Secret of the Cross.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

New York:
J. B. FORD AND COMPANY.
(27 PARK PLACE, AND 24 AND 26 MURRAY STREET.)
1874.

AMERICAN NEWS COMPANY, AGENTS FOR THE TRADE.
European Agents, Sampson Low, Marston & Co., Crown Buildings, 188 Fleet Street, London. Sold by all Carriers and News Dealers.

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Brooklyn, January, 1869.

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THE SECRET OF THE CROSS.

"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."—1 Cor., ii., 1-5.

We are not to understand, from the teaching of the apostle, that human wisdom or philosophy is to be despised. In the lower realms of life, not only is it indispensable, but it is noble. None exercise it more appropriately than the apostle himself did; and there is much of the truth that belongs to the material creation. There are large realms of truth that belong to the lower forms of man's own mind and nature, which are to be discovered by the proper use of the reason, acting under conditions of philosophy; and although this may have carried with it a certain sort of criticism, directly or indirectly, of the Grecian schemes of philosophy, yet there was in them a great power of usefulness. Nothing can reach down through thousands of years, holding the thoughts of men in delightful thrall, which is altogether inapt or foolish; and yet, although a spade is one of the best things a gardener can have, it would be a very poor thing for a mother to try to feed her babe with. Although the reason may be admirable, and the uses of it noble, in the lower

Sunday Evening, May 24, 1874. Lesson: Phil. ii., 1-11. Hymns (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 666, 838, 346.

forms, yet there are certain realms of truth, there are certain sorts of knowledge, for which the reason is not adapted.

It is not, then, to be understood that the Apostle Paul derided intellection, or systems of philosophy, but that he had a higher thought in his mind than the thought of these things.

So, again, it is not to be supposed that the Apostle Paul scoffed at the skillful presentation of truths to men, or a wise approach with knowledge to men's minds; for he himself was a pattern. No more adroit man was ever known. No man, standing among Pharisees, or Sadducees, or any others, recognized more than he the necessity of adapting his teaching to those whom he taught, and to the circumstances in which he taught. When, therefore, he says that he did not come with the wisdom of words, it is not to be understood as being a general fling at rhetorical or oratorical modes of handling the truth; it is to be understood, rather, as implying that there are some things which the most skillful oratory cannot touch; that there are deeper truths, higher realms, than any which can be reached by rhetoric.

Neither did he invalidate in this declaration, those views and representations of God which were already familiar to the Jews, and which pervade the Old Testament. The glory of God as Creator; his sovereignty as Governor; his providence as Administrator—these in various ways he often recognized; but there is something more than these in the divine nature. There is something more than a dynastic God; something more than a rational God; something more than a God of the heaven and of the earth, creating material forms, and administering an economy of laws. There was something transcendently more noble, deeper, higher, wider, and more influential than the current views of the divine nature. That which was built up, and that which was conveyed to the minds of men by material figures drawn from the works of creation, from the procession of armies, from the power of the mightiest sovereigns, from those things which men most enjoy and most admire in these elements in their own appropriate sphere—this was wise and helpful in

leading men's thoughts up to a consideration of the true God; but then, when one had approached to the central Sovereign of the universe, there was a disposition as well as a government. There was a God in his relations to the great creation; but there was a God in his relation to his own children.

A magistrate is allowed to have no feelings, and yet behind all magistracy is the father, the husband, and the friend; so behind and within the sovereign God, there was the personal and dispositional element of the divine nature; and it was this that the apostle caught. Perhaps more certainly, more anxiously, and more urgently than any other one, does he express this interior and personal disposition of God, as made manifest in the Lord Jesus Christ; and it is this that gives us some insight or hint as to the singular use of language which he employs:

"Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross [why did he not say the preaching of *Christ?* He, as it were, changed the name. Why, instead of using that glorious Name that is above every name, should he have said, 'The preaching of the cross'—not, The preaching of Christ—not, The preaching of that gospel system, that system of good news that had irradiated the world, and filled the world with joy? Why should he have said, The preaching of the *cross*—that bloody and hateful instrument of despotism and cruelty?] is to them that perish foolishness [Yes, and it is to this day]; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

What! The cross the power of God? In the passage which I read, Paul says:

"I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified."

In other words, he determined not to know Jesus Christ as he walked in Galilee; as he led captive the throngs of the people; as he stood in the temple, meeting and matching his adversaries, and unfolding, serenely, and with transcendent power, the secrets of the spirit-land; or as he was in his ascension at the right hand of God. He determined not to know Christ efflorescent, victorious, attractive, beautiful, winning. He determined not to know even Jesus Christ, when he came among the Corinthians, except as the wounded, the bruised, the crucified.

Now, there is in this, when you come to scrutinize it,

something strange, something mysterious. Because you must remember that this Paul was almost a vagabond Jew.

If, in 1859 or 1860, a black man had come from the South to New York, he would have stood against a popular prejudice more notorious than that against which Paul, being a Jew, stood in Corinth, a city that fairly groaned under the luxury that wrapped it round perpetually. The Greeks, like all nations, were conceited, and they thought Corinth was an enormous city, and they thought that all but Greeks were barbarians, as the Jews thought that all but Jews were Gentiles; and as we think that all but the elect are non-elect, or that all but members of the church are objects of God's uncovenanted mercies—which are a great deal better than the covenanted mercies of most folks who are in the church.

The Corinthians had this contempt, and especially for the Jews. The Jews were odious to them; and this Jew was unquestionably a diminutive personage. Paul's references to himself are not flattering. I think the idea conveyed of his physical appearance is that it was insignificant. And when he came to this ornate, luxurious city, this city of various refinement and culture, this city of intellectual, artistic, and esthetic power, it is natural that he should have said to himself: "Now, I have a difficult thing to do: how shall I do it? How shall I win this great city? How shall I gain the ear of these people? Will not the cacophony of my language grate on their ears? Will not my thoughts and notions clash with theirs, on the subject of divinity? Where are there any analogies between my views and theirs? How shall I spin my ideas so that they shall join on to theirs? How can I gain them? What is there in common between them and me?"

If there was ever one thing that a Jew believed in, it was that when God should come as Messiah, he would come magnificently; that the earth would shake under his footsteps; that he would advance his glittering banner, and that the armies that would march under it would overthrow all opposition; that all men would bow down before him, and that he would stand in Jerusalem and upon Mount Zion acknowl-

edged to be the glorious Sovereign of time and the world, and subdue the earth to himself. The Jews' notion of the coming Messiah was that he was a being of glory and power, conspicuous, brilliant, unmistakable.

As to the Greeks, their notion of God was that he was a being of eternal youth, eternal beauty, and eternal joy, without alloy, with perfectness of condition, plenitude of place, and peace undisturbed.

When, therefore, Paul came preaching a divine Saviour, how natural it would have been for him to slur over these things which were offensive to his hearers in regard to that Saviour, only making conspicuous such features of him and of his doctrine as were agreeable to them; but no, he said, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." He determined not to know even the Saviour, except as the crucified One. He determined to preach among those proud, beauty-loving, effeminate, sensitive Greeks, the most odious thing that could be preached—namely, a malefactor; a man so weak that the Roman government could easily lay the cross upon him; a man whom his own countrymen despised and crucified.

Such was his text, such was his theme; and he went to this proud city of Corinth, and determined to preach this truth in its most unpalatable form, and to know nothing but that.

Surely, he might well say that the wisdom of this world was not with him; that he was not wise according to the pattern of this world; that he did not depend upon the power of words, or the skillful arrangement of appeals; that these would not help him under the circumstances. What was there that helped him?

He had advanced a new conception of the divine nature, which was foolishness to them who only heard it by the outward ear, while to those who really got it into their mind, and understood what it was, and felt the transcendent beauty of it, and entered into the interior conception of that which represented the constituent elements of the divine nature, it was the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation.

And what was this cross, what was this suffering, what was this broken Saviour, but the revelation of God through

him who thought it was not robbery to be equal with God, and made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and, being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death—the death of the cross?

All this long interval of self-humiliation—what was it? It was that by which the Lord Jesus Christ revealed that the nature of God was not the nature of one who sat serene in eternal blessedness, and had kind thoughts, and sent out kind messages, and that it was not a dynasty in the heavens, lifted up above all trouble and all sorrow. Jesus Christ came to reveal that the nature of God was the source and fountain of sympathy. We see it represented in diminished forms, and under imperfect conditions, in the mother that gives herself for the child, in the hero that will die for a friend, in a thousand ministrations of love in heroic forms, in this life, where it is accounted to be noble and manly for one to suffer for another. The ministration of care, by which, through uncounted hours, the mother bears for the helpless, for the weak, for the child that is brought up not less in her soul than on her bosom, drawing bodily food from the one and soul food from the other—by which she gives herself for the child, and is continually spending and being spent that the child may thrive and grow, she growing as the child grows; the ministration of self-sacrifice, as seen in the mother, the dignity and grandeur of which is inherent in such action—this is a ministration which represents, in some measure, care and love and self-sacrifice in God. In thus giving self for another, they who go down go up; they who serve rule; they who are lowest are the highest; they who are the weakest are the mightiest. In the direction of such a giving of one's self goes moral grandeur—not carnal, dynastic grandeur, not grandeur according to the method and pattern of men on earth, but the reverse. In the great interior sphere, in the spirit land, in the dignities and ranks and gradations to which God belongs, and toward which men aspire—there greatness measures itself by what it does, and not by what it receives; by the power which there is in purity to make the impure pure; by the power which there is in wisdom to make the

ignorant wise; by the power which there is in the divine nature to make the suffering well and whole again; by that power by which God pours himself out, and becomes bread which men eat that they may live, or water which men drink that they may quench their thirst, and that quenching their thirst they may be immortal.

God is the Burden-bearer of the universe. He was the Lamb of Sacrifice from the beginning of the world. The essential nature of God is to suffer not as men suffer who are weak; to suffer not as men suffer under the lash, for disobedience; to suffer not as stumbling ignorance, or blundering prejudice, or overleaping eagerness, or blind avarice suffers; to suffer not in any of the lower forms of suffering; to suffer with that suffering which is full of joy and strength and grandeur, and which comes from the consciousness of giving one's self to make another soul larger and stronger and wiser and better.

Here comes in the fullness of time, the descent of the Messenger of God, the appearance of the Ambassador of Heaven, to make known to men the inward nature of God. He who had stained the heavens; he who had made the earth shake with the thunder of his power; he who had been materially equipped as a sovereign in the eyes of men—he, according to the representation made by Jesus Christ, carried within his exterior grandeur a heart of love and self-sacrifice compared with which the heart of the sweetest mother that ever lived is as a taper compared with the blazing sun at noonday. As is a handful of mist that rises from the sea compared with the whole ocean, so is the purest and deepest and noblest soul among men compared with God.

Now, that great ocean-nature, the infinite God, is not one who sits, as the Greeks thought, on a throne, making the universe subservient to him, nor one, as modern theology has taught substantially, who sits on a throne saying, "For my own glory I live, and everything I make I am going to make as a decoration to myself." Christ came to reveal a God who so loved that sacrifice was to him the emblem of love; and who ruled over a creation that came in at the lowest point, and groaned and travailed in pain. He revealed a God that

was Nurse; that was Physician; that was Minister; that was Friend; that was All in all to the desolate, the poor, and the needy.

The manifestation of Jesus Christ upon the cross was to show that God suffered in order that men might be redeemed from suffering. It was to show the interior disposition of God as an all-helpful, all-serving, all-loving Father, full of the plenitude and grandeur and heroism of mercy. It was to make known to the world the divine ministration of goodness. This was made known through the Lord Jesus Christ, and no person has ever felt the real power of the Lord Jesus Christ that his soul has not in substance come to such a view as this, though he may not have understood it in any philosophical sense. It has been limited, it has been chequered, it has been clothed in ways that were grotesque, it has been so dealt with that the precious truth has been hindered in its progress; but I hold that the sacrifice of Christ was a semblance of the divine nature, in which love universal bore in itself the capacity and the disposition to serve universal want; and that when Christ laid himself down and said, "I am the Road," he let the feet of all the world tread upon him. The old, and the weak, and the captive, and little children, and all that lived, walked upon him, as it were. He made himself a way on which their feet could tread. He put himself underneath them, so that when he lifted himself up he might carry them up with him. Having humbled himself in this way, and done such a mighty and majestic service of love, fitly was it declared that God for this should give him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee might bow, and every tongue confess that he was Lord, to the glory of God.

Our Lord, therefore, is not a despot of supreme decrees, who sits in heaven saying to the world, "There is law, and if you do not come up to that law, you shall be damned—and if you do, a great many of you shall, that I made on purpose to damn." How hideous is the conception of such a sovereign as that, lifted up by the side of Calvary, that speaks of One who descended from the glory of the heavenly estate that he might bring down to men the infinite mercy of

a self-sacrificing God, to represent the glory that the eternities would disclose! What a slander it is to depict God as one who finds his glory in the most despicable and hateful tyranny! For the race is born too weak, too poor, too low down, too ignorant, to find its own way from the ooze. We come from the dust, and to the dust we go again; and if there be not somewhere something mightier than men's own power, O what will become of them? What would become of our children if they were all alone in the house? How many babes would ever get beyond the first few days if there was not a ministration over them of some superior? We have it in the family all the time. We have it in the interpretation of the Bible as it is continually before us. Those who live for weakness and for want; those who pour out their own experience, exercise their own judgment, spend their own time and give their own life for those who need succor, are honorable in the sight of their fellow-men, and are held in high esteem by those around about them by reason of these things. Mankind are but little children. The whole world is in babyhood. Men were created helpless. The race was made subject to vanity not willingly. God did not ask me whether I would be born, nor you. The nations were brought into existence without their volition. The continents of the globe were peopled without consulting the beings by whom they were peopled. The whole earth is in trouble and bondage. And yet there is a God of infinite mercy and compassion. It seems to me that men might well rise up with an indignant infidelity, and maintain their manhood against the mischievous and horrible idea of a demoniac God.

That which takes place in the family between parents and children is an illustration of what takes place in God's universe between him and his creatures.

I know of fathers whose sons are intemperate, and whose houses are as Gethsemanes and Aceldamas; and yet, such is their life that all the surroundings of their homes, and all the golden hours that might otherwise be radiant in the household, are sacrificed; and no continuance in evil, no excess, no temptation, wears out the unweariable patience of

parental love; and thus years and years of debasement being past, yet it is hoped that years in the future may bring reformation.

Now, who gave to the father that love and that heroism? Whence did they come but from Him who does by the universe and by its prodigals what the father in an earthly family learns to do by self-sacrificing love for his son.

With these conceptions of God, I could say, almost, as Paul did, "Let me preach that view, and I will know nothing else."

But there is something very subduing in the mercy of God, more than in his judgments and righteousness. We need the conception of a God who is infinitely righteous, and who is stirring the world up to righteousness. We do not want a God who does not care, and who would let the world go into a slough. We do not want a God who will not hold men responsible, and who will not visit them with pain and penalty for violation. We want a God who shall be a schoolmaster that is exacting, and demand that his pupils shall perform their duties; but we want him to be a schoolmaster who shall work out the peaceable fruit of knowledge in the school boys, and make lovely characters in them.

Those are not the best parents who do not care whether their children go right or wrong. Good parents will determine that their children shall go right; and while they resort to severe measures to secure their obedience, they will have the welfare of those children before them, and they will love them, and will wait and suffer for them. The love of a true parent will empty itself for the child, and make itself the minister and servant of the child's wants. The parent that is wise and faithful will use pain and fear, as well as love, for the exaltation of the child.

And we need the view of a father God, who has determined in his infinite warmth of love that the whole creation shall yet be glorified, ransomed, saved; and who, in time and eternity, by joy, by sorrow, by pain, by pleasure, by fear, by hope, by all motives, administers for the upbuilding of the entire race.

This is a conception of God before which my soul can

bow. I could not bow before a despot. I say freely that there have been views of God taught and held up which are abhorrent to that spirit which has been bred in me by the familiarity of the Gospel, and to the moral sense which I have derived from my knowledge of Christ Jesus. Humility and gentleness and meekness, so far as I have had them sown in me, rise up in revolt at such ideas of God's character as have been made supreme in theology. I rebel against them with all the strength that there is in me. I resist such aspersions upon the life and example of the Lord Jesus Christ, and upon the character of Almighty God. I protest against such slanders of the grandeur and glory of the topmost heaven.

But when you reveal to me that the regnant Power of the universe governs nations and individuals by material forces, by ten thousand cogent motives, by all the influences that can touch all sides of human nature, but that he governs them in love, with infinite patience, for the growth and increase of all his creatures, and that when I say "Our Father which art in heaven" I utter a vaster truth than any fatherhood on earth can interpret to me and make me understand—when you reveal to me such a God as that, everything that is within me bows down before it. I admire, I love, I adore, I follow, and I am smitten through with a sense of my infinite unworthiness, when I think of what such an One is, and of what I am—of the contumescence of my pride, of the infiltrations of my selfishness, and of the despotic sides of my experience, instead of self-sacrificing and self-renouncing sides of that experience.

God is crucified. Do you shrink from that? Have you been brought up to think that God must be One who is lifted above the power of pain? Stop, and think again. What would you think of a man on earth who was so perfect that he could not suffer for a friend? What would you think of a woman who was so serene, with a face enameled and white, that she could see sickness and sorrow and anguish and death come into her family, and sit sweet and happy? What would you think of one who was so perfect that he could remain tranquil and undisturbed in the midst of sorrows in overmeasure on every side? Would you consider absence from pain under such circumstances as perfection? Would you

not feel everything that was generous in your soul revolting at such a conception as that? I say that a being who cannot suffer for another is despicable. The idea of such a being is hateful.

Do you shrink from worshiping Christ? What! do you shrink from worshiping that Name which is above every name—the Name at the sound of which every knee shall bow, and which every tongue shall confess as Lord to the glory of God? Is there not full and glorious permission here?

I call upon every man who has a sense of what is worthy in the noblest conception of manhood to look up to that yet nobler conception of which these are but analogies and emblems—to the glorious sacrifice of Christ as an interpreting element of the divine nature—to God, who rules over the whole world.

Are you unwilling to be his friend? Are you unwilling to be his disciple? Are you willing to take upon you the cross, and to live a life in which you shall give up yourself for the sake of helping others—not every moment, but in great lines and in organized elements of duty? If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his. You may have the spirit of the Pharisee—you may never drink; you may never chew tobacco; you may never swear; you may never shave nor black your boots on Sunday; and you may thank God that you are so regular, eating and drinking just enough, and not a bit too much, owing nobody anything, and paying your taxes regularly, and living, oh how gloriously! And the more gloriously you live, the more you admire yourself; and the more you admire yourself the more you marvel that your neighbors are so imperfect; and when they suffer, you say, "They ought never to have done so: why do they not do as I do?"

Is that the soul of manhood? Is that your conception of manliness? Is not one to be in sympathy with the infirmities of men? He who holds himself to be a servant of men looks humbly upon his own attainments. Is not that the more generous and the nobler way? Is it not that that the world lacks? Is it not that, after all, which is to constitute the triumph of Christianity?

We have had almost everything that has been tried as Christianity. Christianity has had its period of athletic intellectualism; and the reason has not yet unfolded to the world what the world dies for the lack of. We have had all that was esthetic. We have had all the glory and gorgeousness of beauty. We have had all that there was in eloquence and poetry. These things have been thrown about the service of the sanctuary. And yet, the consciousness of the real God who sits in the heaven has not been brought to the world. The power for which the world yet waits is the revelation of that inner nature of God which stands in willingness to suffer, and which teaches us that our greatness lies, not so much in what we get as in what we give—not in our centripetal, but in our centrifugal force.

All creation groans and travails in pain, and it will stop groaning and travailing as soon as men live like Christ. There will be no more question whether Christianity is true or not as soon as men become noble and beautiful and radiant in those dispositions which constitute the elements of Christ's life, and of which Paul said, "I will know nothing but these." As soon as there is this living Christ diffused among men there will be an end of controversy, and men will learn not merely that, but that there is a power in those dispositions before which all other powers fall down.

It is not by mighty combination, or by instituted forces, or by argument, that the world is to be redeemed, but by the secret, silent power of souls that are baptized into the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ. One single heroic deed is worth more than any Athenian oration. One who shows the capacity to lift human nature to a higher level of excellence than it has yet attained is an apostle of God to the world; and the race grows by its power to do the things which the animals cannot do, and that can be done only by a consciousness of human possibility. If we are to grow in knowledge, we must grow in that direction.

Now you are prepared, perhaps, to understand so much—for there is much that in the wisdom of God is not solved yet.

"We speak God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory; but as it is written,

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."

We interpret these things so far as we have the Spirit of God. All the sensibility of that moral consciousness which springs from love is nourished by love, and has its whole power from love.

God grant that every one of us may have this new light, this new knowledge, this new sympathy, this new disclosure. God grant that we may, every one of us, by word, by silence, by deed, by forbearance, by activity, or by rest, make manifest that Christ is in us, and that we have put on the Lord Jesus Christ. So may our whole life be a preaching of the gospel—a manifestation of the glory of him whose name we bear, and whose spirit exalts us to communion, and to understanding, as by-and-by it shall to fellowship, in the very presence of God.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We bless thy name, our Father, for that revelation which thou hast made of thyself through Jesus Christ our Lord. We thank thee that thou art interpreting that revelation itself in our own experience. We thank thee that thou art, by transforming us into the spirit of Jesus, making us to understand him, and through him the Father; and that thou art drawing us into life deeper, and sweeter, and more full of knowledge, than can come by the natural reason, or than we can learn from the world that is outside of us. We rejoice in the power of the divine Spirit, in the recreation and transformation of the souls of men, in the communion between us and thee, in all those great offices and influences by which we are lifted above the flesh, out of the realm of passion, and into the plenitude of the grace of God — into that peace which passeth all understanding — into that sympathy which interprets to us, far beyond the reach of reason, and gives us the secret and mystery of God, so that by the spirit we understand the hidden things of the spirit. We thank thee for all the hours of strength which we have had in the midst of weakness, and for all the days of consolation which we have had in the midst of great troubles. For thou hast often seen us toiling upon the sea, and with the winds, without direction, and unable to make our way, and thou hast come toward us, walking on the turbulent waves; and we have been terrified; and our fear and hope have struggled together; and yet, when thou didst come to us, and wert near to us, and didst ascend into the ship, behold, straightway we were whither we would go. So thou hast dealt with us in light and in darkness. And in summing up our experience, in looking back upon all our life and thy ways with us, we would call thee Him who does exceeding abundantly more than we can ask or think. Thou hast dealt with us more graciously than we deserved. Thou hast dealt with us wondrously. Our souls are witnesses of thy goodness. Thy mercies are ever new; and we call upon our souls, and all that is within us, to praise thy name. We bow our knee to that name which is above every name; and we call thee Lord, and our Lord. And we rejoice, O thou ascended Prince and Saviour, that whatever is needful for us within the spirit land — whatever supplications, or intercessions, or mediation — thou dost make in love. Whatever defense or convoy thou dost send forth in our behalf, thou grantest not according to the wisdom of our asking, but according to the greatness of thy life.

Now, we do desire not to stand in ourselves. Knowing how feeble we are in things high, and how strong we are in things that are prone to the earth; knowing how strong we are in the flesh, and how poor in the spirit, we do not desire to stand in our own merit, nor our own excellence, in any way whatsoever. We rejoice that our excellency is in thee. Thou that hast lent thyself to us; thou that hast called us thine own — thou that callest us no longer servants, but henceforth friends, and not friends alone, but children; thou that hast coupled us to thyself, and by the bonds of omnipotent love art drawing us to thee in an inseparable union — we rejoice in thy great grace and glory as in part our own. For we are heirs of God, and

joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, and are glad that the things which we win are all the better because they are of God, since they are in a sweet and blessed partnership of ownership with Jesus Christ.

And now, we pray that we may stand thus girded about with this belief, inspired with all the hopes of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. May we be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Vouchsafe, we pray thee, thine especial thought and mercy, to-night, to all that are grouped together here. This has been a temple of the revelation of thy goodness. Thousands here have dropped the tears of sorrow, but have lifted up eyes of gladness in the midst of sorrow, and in spite of it. Many have come grievously burdened, and behold, here the burden has been swept away. Thou hast made this place sacred, not by the hands of men, not by any external act, but by the grace of God, by the ministration of the spirit; and this place —how beautiful is it! It is to many of us the very gate of heaven; for here we have stood and seen the golden leaves thrown wide open, and we have beheld the glory of God. We have beheld the crowned Saviour. We have followed thither, in the inspired and raptured hours of the sanctuary, those who have gone out from us, dearly beloved brethren who have labored with us in word and doctrine. We have sent heavenward many saintly companions, and a multitude of little ones; we have beheld them shine brighter and purer than stars, and have rejoiced in sorrow, and have taken comfort through faith. Even in the midst of adversities and trials, how sacred is this place!

Now, let it be again, to-night, a place of divine ministration. Rebuke those who need rebuke. Be faithful to thy beloved. Give pain where pain is required for medicine. Withhold not thy hand. Chastise if thou lovest: or, forbear as thou wilt; only let us know that thou art dealing with us in love, as a father deals with his children. Give great strength to those who are greatly tried; great patience to those whose trials continue; great light and clarity of judgment to those who are in perplexity; and great manliness and courage to those who are grievously beset and tempest-tossed.

Grant, we pray thee, that every one may find his strength to be as his day is. So may it not be a vain thing that we have come hither. May we have such growth in the inward life, and such consolation of the divine spirit, such insight of things which lie beyond the senses, that this shall continue to be as the gate of heaven.

We pray for all of our absent ones—for those upon the sea, for those in the wilderness, and for those in distant lands.

We pray for those who are strangers in our midst. We pray that thou wilt look upon them, and grant that here, in this house, they may find themselves at home with the brethren of Jesus Christ, and with the Lord. Here may they find, for the moment, all the plenitude of divine grace and consolation. And wilt thou bless those whom they have left behind. Hear their prayers, listen to their desires, we beseech of thee, for their beloved ones; and answer abundantly.

We pray for any who have come in hither forlorn, strangers, unfriended, knowing not whither to go or what to do. By thy providence be gracious unto them. And may they not lose faith, nor hope, nor courage; but to the end, with all manliness, may they patiently persevere in the things that are right.

We pray that thou wilt deliver any who are in the thrall of temptation; any that have been misled; any that are in those sorrows which come from remorse; any that have fallen; wilt thou graciously lift them up, and teach us to have compassion upon them. May we deal with them forbearingly, knowing that we, too, may be tempted.

We pray that thou wilt spread abroad that spirit by which thou dost cleanse the world of transgression, in the hearts of thy people. Take away the distemperature of passion, of irritableness, of pride, of the dominion of men's selfishness one over another. Bring men together in love, and in mutual respect, each recognizing that the other is a servant of God.

So we pray that every one may stand to his own Master, unhindered, unyoked, unshackled. Grant, we pray thee, that more and more there may be all freedom in the church of Christ, and that all those collisions, and envyings, and hateful jealousies which have prevailed in days gone by may be purged away. And let that bright day come, at last, when love, the sweetest, shall become the strongest of all things. More and more let thy pure light shine from out of the heaven, and all impure light depart whence it came. Let thy kingdom come and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

And to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, shall be praises everlasting. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we pray that thou wilt bless us in the truth that we have contemplated; but bless us yet more, we beseech of thee, in the attempt to render that truth into our own lives. We know the right way. Thou art pleased, at times, to put our feet upon the mount of transfiguration; and we discern thee in the radiance of thy glorified form. And yet, when we come down again, at the foot of the mountain are demoniac influences, and all weaknesses of men. We fain would live far above human infirmity, and build our tabernacles where thou art beautiful. We would fain not go down into life to bear its sins, and burdens, and cares. Grant that we may have a better mind. May we not only determine to avail ourselves of that salvation which is offered to us through Jesus Christ by his suffering, willingly borne for our sakes and for the sakes of all creation; but may we ourselves become like unto him. And in the same way may we more and more develop that side which is full of sweetness and full of medicine for souls that are wounded. And so we pray that thou wilt grant to all thy church the unfolding in them of that which is like thee. O, bring near to us a sense of God's humiliation,

and the beauty of it; God's service, and the need of it. Grant, we pray thee, that we may accept those things which the world despises; and though to them who understand them not they are foolishness and a stumbling, may they be to us the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation. We ask it in the adorable name of Jesus, to whom, with the Father and the Spirit, shall be praises everlasting. *Amen.*

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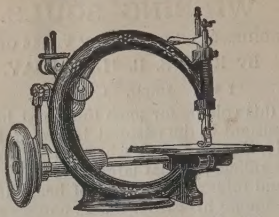

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